

South Dakota AFNR

Academic Integration Activities: Example #9

→ *Ag Communication students understand how slang and colloquialisms impact the meaning of text in news stories.*

1. Ag Standard

Ag Communications –AC2.2

Compose an agricultural news story.

2. Academic Standard

11.R.2.1

Students can analyze how diction affects the interpretation of text.

- > Identify slang (non-standard vocabulary of a given culture)
- > Identify colloquialisms (informal conversational diction)

3. Background Information

Informal language, such as slang and colloquialisms, can affect the meaning of text because using slang and colloquialisms can indicate who wrote the text and where the text was written.

Slang is generally defined as language peculiar to a particular group (e.g. teenagers, surfers, soldiers, etc.).

A colloquialism is a word or phrase that is typically only used in a certain area or region (i.e. “pop” in the Midwest vs. “soda” on the coasts vs. “coke” in the South).

4. Example in Context

Read the following text from a news article:

“While there are a number of great upgrades on the latest version of the 9000-series combine, perhaps the most impressive is what operators can expect in the cab. The new design is tight; operators will feel like they are driving a luxury performance car with heated and cooled seats, wood inlayed panels, and sleek and easy-to-read controls.”

Ask these questions rhetorically and answer the questions aloud:

- > Where was informal language used? (the word “tight”)
- > Is this slang or a colloquialism? (slang, as it is language used by a group [teenagers] – not in a region)
- > How does the use of this diction affect our interpretation of the text? Or, how would the story have been different if the word “superb” had been used instead of “tight”? (many possible answers)

5. Guided Practice Exercises

Read the following text from a news article:

“This year’s legislative session has left many state representatives feeling rode hard and put up wet when it came to water policy issues. ‘I’ve been involved in 18 legislative sessions and have never been so exhausted as I am after this one,’ said Representative Dan Hall. Representatives dealt with 16 bills introduced to the floor related to water policy in the state. Dozens of hearings were held, hundreds of amendments were considered, and countless emails, letters, phone calls were received. Water has become a hot topic for farmers, ranchers, and urban residents alike as the state enters its fourth year of a persistent drought.”

Ask these questions rhetorically and answer the questions aloud:

- > Where was informal language used? (the phrase “rode hard and put up wet”)
- > Is this slang or a colloquialism? (colloquialism, as it is language used typically only in the Western U.S.)
- > How does the use of this diction affect our interpretation of the text? (many possible answers)
- > What other word or phrase could have been used in place of “rode hard and put up wet”?

6. Independent Practice Exercises

There are three tasks in this exercise:

- > Identify a list of three slang words or phrases. List the group that is most likely to use them.
- > Identify one colloquialism unique to this area of the country.
- > Write the lead paragraph of a news story that correctly uses one of the slang words or the colloquialism.

7. Notes

You can refer back to this activity as students begin to write and review more news articles. You can have students try to find slang and colloquialisms in ag publications.